



GROUND COVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP

JULY 2017 VOLUME 8 ISSUE 7

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\$2

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Preserve local control to check totalitarian impulses



by Susan Beckett
Publisher

It is easy to miss the subtext of a pair of anti-immigration bills that recently passed a first reading of the Committee on Local Government in the Michigan House. The bills aim to stop cities in Michigan from declaring themselves to be Sanctuary Cities – places where local officials are prohibited from providing information regarding the status of immigrants to federal immigration authorities. The target of the bills is local officials and civil servants, including the police, who are threatened with penalties designed to strike fear in their hearts.

What makes this especially troubling

is that fear and negating decentralized government are two strategies totalitarian regimes have used in order to gain and consolidate power. As ideological antisemitism justified terror in Nazi Germany, islamophobia and xenophobia are being used to do the same in the United States today.

These bills prohibit local or county governments from enacting or enforcing any law that limits communication and cooperation with federal officials concerning the immigration status of an individual in Michigan. It also voids any law, ordinance, policy or rule that violates these acts. HB 4105 applies to local governments, while HB 4334 concerns county governments.

The Michigan Attorney General (AG) may investigate these complaints at any time a violation is reported. The local or county government must cooperate with the investigation. The bills also allow any resident to sue in state court if they feel these acts are not being enforced. (Does this not sound like citizens denouncing and spying on each other, perhaps to their own advantage?)

If the bills pass the Senate and are signed by Governor Snyder, then after a 61-day grace period, the AG must bring an action to enforce the act in circuit court if a local unit or county enacts or enforces a law that violates either act. If the circuit court determines that an elected or appointed official knowingly and willfully enacted or enforced a law prohibited by these bills, the court must assess a civil fine of no less than \$2,500 and no more than \$7,500 against the elected or appointed official, in addition to any other penalty provided by law. Officials at risk include members of boards, councils and commissions of counties, cities, villages and townships and everyone employed by them, including county sheriffs and local police.

The broad language leaves the acts open to interpretation, such that even a conversation in which an official fails to ask someone their immigration status

could be construed as failing to cooperate with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Fear of a lawsuit could impel some to overstep and question the immigration status of everyone they encounter. ICE agents, who have a quota to keep 34,000 people a day in detention beds, could use these laws to pressure local officials into implicating innocent people.

There are other practical arguments against these bills – for example, they are unnecessary and inappropriate since enforcement of immigration laws is a federal, not state, matter. They also greatly impede the ability of local law enforcement to solve and prevent crimes in immigrant neighborhoods where they will come to be seen as the enemy.

Which leads us to the questions: What drove Representatives LaFave and Hornberger to introduce these bills, and why were they unanimously supported by all the Republicans on the committee despite extensive testimony against them and no testimony in favor of them?

My fear is that it is an initial volley in a campaign to terrorize citizens into submission, orchestrated by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) or some other cabal. Most politicians are influenced by the big money donors who can sway their party's primaries and will therefore do their bidding unless they see a compelling reason not to. And they may well not see the reason in this case.

Current conditions in the United States are hospitable to totalitarian government. Many people feel isolated and

disconnected from others and their government; widespread government surveillance has been approved; one in 31 Americans is already under the control of the corrections system; and most Americans rely on curated news sources, leaving them vulnerable to the appeal of alternate, consistent, constructed realities whose stability and empowerment yield submission to those who create them. Significant numbers of people are embracing character assassination and violence as a welcome relief from boring, dead-end lives that lack connection and satisfaction.

Our best defense against the totalitarian impulses of government is to strengthen local power and control, including returning control of politicians to their constituents. State Senator Rebekah Warren has introduced a resolution calling on the state to support a constitutional amendment to overturn Citizens United, the ruling that effectively removed all limits on campaign donations and allows the interests of the wealthiest individuals, corporations and special interest groups to overshadow those of ordinary Americans.

We have seen states and cities across the United States assert values other than those of the current regime as they chafe against policies that target immigrants or minimize climate change. Regardless of your position on these issues, the ability to act locally is an important check on federal power.

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Unwinding the yarn



by Rev. Dr. Martha
Brunell
Groundcover
Contributor

Decades before the first celebration of Earth Day, before state bottle bills offering a small refund for returned bottles and cans or the habit of paying attention to which plastics can be recycled according to number – decades before all that, there were knitters, crocheters, and their yarn. The practice of repurposing or recycling yarn is an old one.

I once had a pair of mittens made in Grand Rapids from pieces of other knit garments cut and patched to create incredible warmth for my hands. That is one way of reusing yarn, but it isn't the one I intend to focus on here. I'm going to remind us about what can happen when a knit or crocheted item is

outgrown, no longer pleasing or doesn't turn out as expected. With care the garment, blanket or decorative item can be unraveled and the yarn rewound into a new ball, ready and waiting for the next project. That next project may resemble the previous one significantly or not at all.

Several weeks ago I was facilitating a writing group. The prompt we started with was a half sheet of paper titled "A Page to Unwind," with a piece of yarn curving its way back and forth across the page toward a ball of yarn at the bottom. One of the writers at the table wrote a small story about a knitter unraveling a sweater she had made for one person to then shape the yarn into a second garment for someone else.

As she read aloud what she had written, I thought about faith communities, other institutions, and traditional ways of doing things. All of these face a contemporary barrage of change and

upheaval. We live in transitional times. In every direction, much that has been is being smashed, thrown out, traded in or disregarded as being of limited or no value. I'm not convinced that is the wisest strategy for healthy, courageous, cost-effective or inclusive movement into a new day or a new understanding. I want to pause with the wisdom of those who knit and crochet.

There is much that is not right, just or helpful in the current incarnation of faith communities, governmental structures, schools, neighborhoods and access to resources. We could, with patience and a measured pace, unwind what has been while identifying its yarn, elements worth saving and reusing for fresh patterns and promises in our life together.

For me the sturdy yarn with more life ahead could be courage or curiosity, honesty or humor, boldness or an inclination to begin again, openness to

imagination or improvisation with who and what is at hand, a naming of fears or a commitment to fruitfulness broadly shared. What would it be like if we gathered in a room, around a table, at an agreed-upon time as knitters and crocheters do regularly? And into that room, around that table, at that time, we would show up with the yarn we have reclaimed from what has been. Then that yarn might be combined into co-created, yet untried experiences that would better support the fundamental common life that is not mine or yours but ours.

We can choose to unwind but not discard completely what we have known, with its array of benefits and hurts, to consider what we can make – one with another, side by side. Do you want to be there in the room, around the table, at the agreed-upon time? I do. Bring your yarn.



Right: Michael Dion, former Groundcover News vendor, was a friend to many and will be dearly missed. Before his passing, Mike found a new home for his beloved chinchilla, Buddy.

Remembering Michael Dion

Though his days as an active Groundcover News vendor preceded Groundcover office manager Amy McGovern's tenure, she knew him well from other encounters. "Mike was always there if you needed him," Amy said. "He helped me keep it together during a very challenging time in my life."

It seems like everyone knew Mike. He'd walk around town wearing his Elyon-emblazoned t-shirt, talking with people and finding ways to do God's work.

Groundcover vendor Lonnie Baker shared, "When I first met Mike, my shoes was hurting my feet. Mike took me over to his house and gave me his very comfortable pair of shoes. When I was living on the street and ran into Mike, I always had a place to sleep at. I say to Mike: 'I mourn. Rest in peace.'"

Groundcover vendor and sales specialist Joe Woods lived with Mike for a while. "He had a big heart. If he saw someone on the street, he would bring them home for the night or hang out with them for a while," Joe said. "He is my brother in Christ. We talked about the Bible all the time and he helped me work through some things. And he was always smiling that funny, goofy smile of his."

Amy talked with Mike by phone for an hour a couple of days before he jumped from the parking structure on William and Fourth Ave. in the early morning hours of June 15, 2017. He told her he was suicidal but was planning to go visit

his brother in Boston for a few weeks. He asked Amy to care for his chinchilla, Buddy. He called back multiple times to be sure she had air conditioning, money and the experience to really care for and love Buddy.

"He loved Buddy like a child," Joe reminisced.

Mike dropped Buddy off at the Humane Society with instructions to give him to Amy. Anyone wishing to honor Mike by supporting Buddy can mail us a check made out to Amy McGovern or drop off a donation at the Groundcover News office, 423 S. Fourth Ave., Ann Arbor, MI, 48103.

"Because we called him 'Crazy Mike,' it seemed that he was immune from life's suffering. How could we have been so wrong? His passing has left a void in the community, homeless and otherwise, that cannot be filled," remarked Lit Kurtz.

"He liked being in the psych ward," said Joe. "They put him to work – he had a desk and everything."

As another old friend of Mike's once remarked, "No one suffers like the mentally ill."

No information has been released yet regarding funeral arrangements or memorial services.

Mike will be deeply missed.

GROUNDCOVER MISSION:

Creating opportunity and a voice for low-income people while taking action to end homelessness and poverty.

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Workshop series to empower writing and achieving life goals

by Madeline Diehl and Susan Beckett

Groundcover News just launched a two-month writing workshop called “Celebrating the Right to Write” as part of our efforts to empower more vendors to write articles, and to provide support for our regular vendor contributors to take their writing and lives to the next level.

“Groundcover News provides me with a way to earn enough money to make a living, pay my bills and live in somewhat stable housing,” explained Lit Kurtz, who has published dozens of articles and essays in Groundcover News. Lit previously worked for many years as an elementary schoolteacher in Detroit before being laid off in 2012. She exhausted her unemployment benefits while trying to find another job. Finally, she moved to Ann Arbor in the fall of 2013 and spent all her retirement money on temporary housing and living expenses while she established herself here and became proficient at selling Groundcover News.

Now Lit’s ambition is to earn more of her income from writing. “I was just reading the articles and books out there and I thought, I can write something as good as this or better,” she explained. She thinks she has a valuable story to tell as an African-American woman who has personal insights into issues like unemployment, the public educa-



Some of the Right to Write workshop attendees, facilitator Madeline Diehl, and therapist Hugh Shirato get their thoughts on paper at the first of five group sessions.

tion system and conscious and unconscious bias.

Susan Beckett, publisher, stated that the “Celebrating the Right to Write” workshop is a natural outgrowth of Groundcover News’ mission to help bring about social change through giving voice to the feelings and experiences of marginalized people in the community.

“A new means of perception opened up to me when Hugh Shirato, MSW, shared in the workshop that he learned to observe and meditate by imitating his dog,” said Beckett.

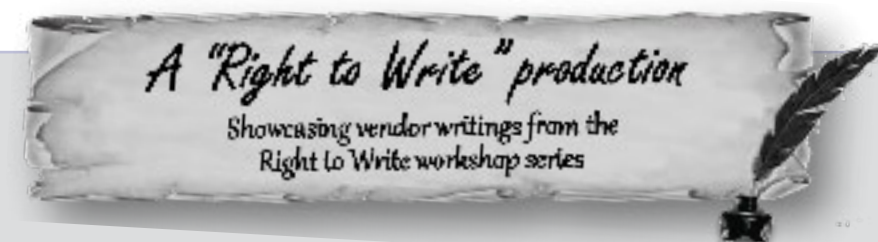
block and the fear of making mistakes, as these are often significant impediments to new writers. Beckett had been looking for a way to empower vendors to write more articles for the paper when Diehl approached her to see if Groundcover News might be interested in offering a therapeutic writing workshop similar to one Diehl designed and led for veterans with mental illness last winter.

A local writer and mental health advocate, Diehl says she made the decision to lead such workshops after her “extremely fulfilling” experience working with veterans.

“Before I took Madeline’s workshop (for veterans), I was an empty shell going nowhere except the couch,” said Ann Whaley. “Madeline’s workshop gave my life purpose and I am finally beginning to feel entitled to pursue my dreams.” Whaley’s dreams include getting off disability and becoming an art therapist – which she’s actively pursuing by applying to a master’s program and preparing work samples.

Whaley says she particularly benefitted from Diehl’s emphasis on using writing to take care of herself and her mental health. “Madeline repeats again and again that our healing is more impor-

see WORKSHOP, page 5



Panhandlers have rights, too!

by Elizabeth “Lit” Kurtz
Groundcover Vendor #159

In the din of online comments about a recent panhandler story that went viral, one important element about the panhandler was lost – his rights. In 2013, a federal judge declared panhandling to be a legal First Amendment right of free speech. Thus, standing and holding a sign to ask for donations crosses no legal lines.

This recent incident revealed once again that panhandling remains the subject of vitriolic controversy in our area and across the nation, with few people understanding the reasons or the rights of those who do panhandle. The unfavorable perception of this group of people remains constant, as evidenced by the sentiments expressed following the incident.

As the story goes, the individual who was panhandling did not accept an offer for a full-time job paying \$10 an hour. He not only turned it down, but remarked that he makes more through panhandling. This, in turn,

caused the spurned employer to post a huge, red cardboard sign in the open hood of a car facing the street discouraging people from giving to the person.

One online commenter exclaimed that she no longer gave to panhandlers due to the job opportunities she saw posted on any given day while driving. That comment reveals how people too often oversimplify the hiring process by suggesting that “Help Wanted” signs translate into jobs for the homeless.

The hard facts are that few employers are willing to tolerate an employee coming to work with huge backpacks, unshowered and hungry. The emotional state of someone in this type of living condition rarely lends itself to the focus needed for a job. Furthermore, criminal background checks and disabilities often exclude many people from entering the mainstream workforce.

What people also miss is that survival itself is a job, just as many of us have experienced that seeking employment when one is unemployed becomes a full-time occupation.

Everyone has the right to make a life in the manner which his or her circumstances dictate. But rather than accept the fact that the presence of so many panhandlers on our streets is only a reflection of a crisis in our society, we display mean-spirited contempt.

Despite the economic downturn within this past decade, it is clear that being homeless still makes one vulnerable to many of the worst practices recognizable from our not-so-distant past. We are the same country, for instance, that once hid people we deemed “mentally retarded” in attics because of our own fallibilities and sensitivities to their differences.

Every generation has its humanitarian and social justice challenges. At the beginning of this century we must not shirk from the responsibility that has been handed to us. We must recognize that homelessness has yet to be defeated, and work towards overcoming it – as we have other problems that

threatened to divide us.

Despite the existence of Groundcover News in Ann Arbor, there will always be people who will choose to panhandle. There will always be those who, on a long-term or short-term basis, cannot fit into a typical work environment for a myriad of reasons. Rather than demonize these people, we as a society must work together to become more understanding of our differences.

Thanks to my fit with the Groundcover News, my panhandling days may be behind me. But if all else fails and I am stuck in a strange city with no money or documentation, I certainly hope that I can depend on a government to fulfill its obligation to allow me to exercise my First Amendment right to peacefully ask passersby for assistance. To ask the timeless question, “Sistah (or Brotha), can you spare a dime?”

“Right to Write” workshop empowers Groundcover vendors

continued from page 4

tant than anything we could ever write, no matter how profound it might be,” said Whaley.

Diehl begins each workshop by leading her students in mindfulness exercises (to help them relax and focus), gathering their blessings, and making positive affirmations to turn around negative thinking. Students are discouraged from trying to write about any traumatic life experiences before they learn how to use writing as a grounding, healthy spiritual practice. Students also compile a list of contacts in case they become emotionally triggered by negative memories and thoughts while writing.

While Diehl is not a licensed therapist, her status as a peer – someone with a diagnosis of mental illness – makes her a very effective workshop designer and facilitator, according to Jennifer King, LMSW, the therapist who oversaw Diehl’s work with veterans.

“Madeline’s curriculum is unique because it draws equally from her own experience as a person who has lived with a diagnosis of mental illness as well as her decades-long career as a professional writer,” said King. “Her lived experi-

ences give credibility to her suggestions, and her emphasis on recovery encourages others to dream.”

Some vendors struggle with mental illness, but the focus of Diehl’s workshop is to affirm that all of her students have the right to dream and to reach their dreams, and that they are valuable members of society who have the right to claim their voices and use them. In this way, the workshop reinforces the mission of Groundcover News.

“I was particularly moved when Madeline told workshop participants, ‘We can use our stories to realize our dreams. The process is healing and the product is writing.’ That has been my personal experience, and one that I’d wish for all our vendors,” said Beckett.

Each session concludes with a healthy lunch of fruit, salad and pizza donated by Hello Faz Pizza (named for Faz Husain, a well-known and well-loved local businessman who died in 2006 and left the business in the hands his wife Nikki and son Ali).

“Donating our pizza to the workshop students is very much in line with our mission of helping improve our com-

munity,” explained Ali. “Whenever a homeless person used to come through the door and ask for work, my father often tried his best to give them a job right on the spot. And it usually worked out for us, in the sense that the person turned out to be a valuable member of our team. My father was committed to improving the lives of his fellow community members, and that’s why we are so thrilled to support Groundcover and its students.”

Funding for the “Celebrating Our Right to Write” project was provided in part through a \$2,000 grant from First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor. “We provided these funds to shine the light of personal growth and progress into the lives of Groundcover News vendors, whom we meet and talk to on Ann Arbor’s streets,” said Phil Tuchinsky, co-chair of the church’s Jackson Social Welfare Fund Committee.

Output from this workshop begins with this issue (see pages 4 and 9), and a public reading is tentatively scheduled for September 14.

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Food pantry swoops in to alleviate hunger among EMU students

by Malinda Holmes
EMU Contributor

Pursuing a college degree comes with its own unique set of challenges. Most students are faced with balancing a large course load, employment, involvement in on-campus organizations, and managing to get a full eight hours of sleep each night. College is difficult enough without being forced to encounter the added stress of not having a roof over your head and food on your table.

A significant number of students are struggling to get their basic physical needs met. The Wisconsin HOPE Lab, which researches housing and food insecurity among post-secondary students, reported in 2016 that two-thirds of all community college students are currently struggling with food insecurity and half are housing-insecure. One-third are regularly hungry and 14 percent face homelessness.

Often, it is difficult for these students

to reach out and find the resources they need. Fortunately, the issues of poverty are beginning to gain attention and action is being taken on the Eastern Michigan University (EMU) campus. **see SWOOPS,** page 11



Hayley Moraniac adds food to the shelves at Swoops, the food pantry she persuaded EMU to open for students.

COMMON CYCLE

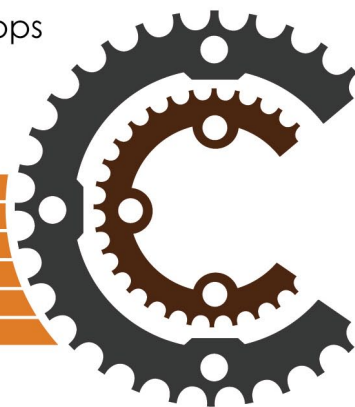
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Art exhibition: Buddhas on Death Row

by Ilsang Laurie Jackson
Groundcover Contributor

At the age of 18, Texas death row inmate Moyo was convicted of murdering two people. For nearly 16 years, he has been living in a cell smaller than the average parking space, in solitary confinement. During this time, he began practicing Buddhist meditation, became an avid reader and discovered art for exploring his experiences and emotions.

In 2014, Maria Jain – a Finnish woman living in Helsinki – found the website of a program that connects pen pals with people who are incarcerated. She came across Moyo's profile and was struck by their similarities: they are the same age, both are artists, and they share strong interests in Buddhist practice, yoga and travel. Moyo and Maria began corresponding. Then Moyo decided that he would like to study the image of the Buddha and began sending paintings to Maria.

The art exhibition "Buddhas on Death Row" was born from this friendship. First shown in Helsinki last August, it will be presented at the Ann Arbor



One of many paintings Moyo, now a practicing Buddhist, has produced while in solitary confinement on death row.

Zen Buddhist Temple from July 11–25. Exhibit hours are Tuesdays from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m., Sundays from noon to 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 to 4:00 p.m., and by appointment.

Moyo's work consists of a series of Buddha portraits and his accompanying texts on suffering and happiness,

violence and peace, impermanence and eternity, and ignorance and awareness. Moyo uses basic art materials in combination with items he gathers from various sources: cards and letters, magazines, and even twigs and seeds dropped by birds in the barren prison recreation yard.

Retail crimes: Surviving without a check



as told to
La Shawn
Courtwright
Groundcover
Vendor #56

(This is part of a series of vignettes describing the survival strategies of people with no regular income.)

I would start my day by hitch-hiking rides to get to areas with stores where I would meet up with others I knew. We

would go to stores and commit retail fraud crimes and credit card frauds. I did this to support my alcohol and marijuana habits. I used the money I made to rent motel rooms and order delivery food.

I would have a room full with eight to nine people laying around listening to music, smoking, drinking, and some even had sexual relationships openly, and others would join in. When the money was all used up, we would continue to commit crimes to go on.

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		8	2	4			9	5
9								
6		1		7	5			
4	2			1			3	6
			3	6		5		1
								4
7	1			3	4	8		
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Groundcover Vendor Code

While Groundcover News is a nonprofit organization and newspaper vendors are considered contracted self-employers, we still have expectations of how vendors should conduct themselves while selling and representing the paper.

The following list is our Vendor Code of Conduct, which every vendor reads and signs before receiving a badge and papers. We request that if you discover a vendor violating any tenets of the Code, please contact us and provide as many details as possible. Our paper and our vendors should be positively impacting our County.

All vendors must agree to the following code of conduct:

- Groundcover News will be distributed for a voluntary donation of \$2, or the face value of the paper. I agree not to ask for more than face value or solicit donations by any other means.
- I will only sell current issues of Groundcover News.
- I agree not to sell additional goods or products when selling the paper or to panhandle, including panhandling with only one paper.
- I will wear and display my badge when selling papers.
- I will only purchase the paper from Groundcover News Staff and will not sell to or buy papers from other Ground-

- cover News vendors, especially vendors who have been suspended or terminated.
- I agree to treat all customers, staff and other vendors respectfully. I will not "hard sell," threaten, harass or pressure customers, staff, or other vendors verbally or physically.
- I will not sell Groundcover News under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- I understand that I am not a legal employee of Groundcover News but a contracted worker responsible for my own well-being and income.
- I understand that my badge is property of Groundcover News and will not deface it. I will present my badge when purchasing the papers.
- I agree to stay off private property when selling Groundcover News.
- I understand to refrain from selling on public buses, federal property or stores unless there is permission from the owner.
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- Look to be
- Trig function
- Emulated Washington, Grant, or Ford?
- * Gave high marks to
- * Aimed ambitiously
- Biblical sufferer
- Mrs., abroad
- Super Bowl LI winners, informally
- ___ by Dre (headphone brand)
- Many eBay transactions
- Designer Gucci
- Conditional release
- Double, for instance
- Performing a parental chore (and a clue as to how the answers to the starred clues were made?)
- Rapper Lil' ___
- Sea between Turkey and Greece
- Acquire
- Field goal kickers, for instance
- Foot woes
- Surf sound
- B&O and Reading, in Monopoly
- Some Best Buy buys
- * "Along Came ___" (2001 film)
- * Heartache
- Don't deny
- Alpine goat
- Giant fair
- ___ Island
- Euro division
- Lobster part
- Volleyball star/model Gabrielle
- Piano's 88

DOWN

- The "H" in "M*A*S*H": Abbr.
- Computer operator
- Former New York stadium
- Tony-winning Best Musical of 2016
- Adjust the alarm
- Roman poet
- Top ___ list
- Some clear soft drinks
- Bloke
- Cookbook offering
- Like some pantyhose
- Hard rain?
- Lincoln's in-laws
- Distress call at sea
- Enclose securely
- Wall Street deals
- Support, as a candidate
- Grades 1-12, for short
- Neck projection
- National Wildlife Federation raccoon mascot
- ___ & Perrins (Worcestershire sauce brand)
- South Dakota's capital
- Persian Gulf land
- Cooking abbr.
- Fed. budget group
- Pan for gold
- Siskel or Ebert
- Rite Aid alternative
- Indy driver
- " ___ Mio" (Italian song standard)
- Smartphone missives
- Medication unit
- Say nay
- Bar on a car
- Kindle rival
- Matrix divisions
- Queen's subject?

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The homeless life

by Betty Crawford
Groundcover Vendor #398

I have nowhere to go, I am on a constant roam
I live by the motto, wherever I lay my head is home
From time to time I stay in a shelter
But usually not for very long, because I cannot abide by the rules
That is why right at the moment...

I AM HOMELESS

The streets are not safe for me
But right now I have nowhere else to be
I do not sleep very well
Living on the streets is a living hell
But right now I have no other choice...

I AM HOMELESS

Into the streets is where I go
To live with friends, and even foes
Forcing me to drop to my knees
It's like being stung by a thousand bees
I hate to have to say...

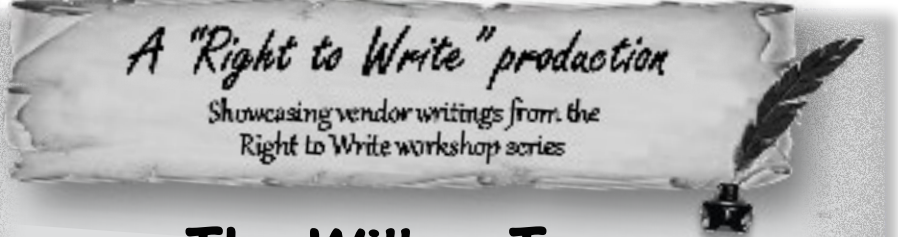
I AM HOMELESS

People think that they know me so well
But they really don't, they weren't even there when I fell
Fell to my knees in tears
Asking God to give me back my years
Years that I have wasted away
But I have had to pay
People want me to give in and say...

I MUST BE HOMELESS

But that is not true, that is just a ploy
I can know peace, happiness, and joy
I can stop all the despair in my life
And cut into negativity like a knife
For at some point in my life...

I WILL NOT BE HOMELESS



The Willow Tree

by Anne Whaley
Groundcover Vendor #402

She ignored her favorite willow;
it was wilting, and
she didn't have energy to water it.
She just could not feel it.
She left it to the elements.

Events danced with time.
Old age was stealing her mind.
She had to move
not far -
a new angle
on her old address.

There was a fence
she could walk to
on good days.
One such day
she looked over the fence.
And there protruding from the meadow grass
was a splendid sapling willow
about to be called a tree,
right where she remembered it to be.

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*Bethlehem Church
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Groundcover office*





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10:00 a.m. Sanctuary
Summer Sunday school, 10:15
Fellowship Hour at 9:30

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Groundcover-Boober connection subject of Kiwanis talk

by Kevin Spangler
Groundcover Vendor #307

The downtown Ann Arbor Kiwanis Club recently invited me to talk about my life and how I started Boober Tours. I shared how I was homeless and in and out of jail, addicted to drugs and alcohol, and that Groundcover News was a big contributor in helping me successfully recover. Groundcover offered me a position selling, and also presented many different kinds of workshops to help with personal and business development. I even brought United Way in to teach my Boober crew what I learned about financial management from those workshops.

I am beginning to see people change for the better around me. When I look

at myself in the mirror I feel proud. For so many years I felt the opposite and battled thoughts of suicide for a long time.

I had a really nice commercial (viewable on YouTube by searching Boober Tours) made of a virtual pedicab tour of Ann Arbor that I showed at Kiwanis. Now I'm seeing if my other sponsors are interested in having their businesses featured in a future virtual tour commercial.

As for the rest of my business update, I am down three pedicabs and am continuing to take parts off of them to do maintenance. I have ordered parts but still have not received them.

I now have expanded to the point where I need a manager, and the perfect

one stepped up to the position. He is an incredible soul and has a lot of life knowledge. This frees me up from spending eight hours a day fixing and maintaining the pedicabs. I will now be able to focus on branding, marketing and building the app to enhance access to Ann Arbor businesses and transportation services. The app is on its way; the process is moving slower than I anticipated. All this is very exciting to be a part of. Thank you, Ann Arbor, for welcoming me and encouraging me.

Register now to vote on election day: Tue., 8/08

by Mary Morgan
CivCity Contributor

Did you know there's a local election on Tuesday, Aug. 8? In Ann Arbor, we'll be electing people to serve on the Ann Arbor City Council. They make decisions that affect our daily lives, so it's important to vote.

Four other communities have important issues on the ballot, too. Ypsilanti residents will be voting on a tax to help pay for the Water Street Redevelopment Project's debt. Dexter Community Schools is seeking funds for school buildings and other infrastructure. In Lyndon Township, voters will decide

if they want a tax to build a public network for high-speed internet access. And residents of Northfield Township will vote on a tax for fire and medical rescue services.

In order to vote on Aug. 8, you must be registered by Monday, July 10. Check your registration status at the Michigan Voter Information Center at www.Michigan.gov/Vote. You can also use that website to get a registration form and sample ballot.

Ann Arbor residents can also get help about how to register by contacting the Ann Arbor City Clerk's office at (734) 794-6140. The office is located on the

second floor of City Hall, 301 E. Huron.

If you live outside of Ann Arbor and have questions about registering to vote, call the Washtenaw County Elections Division at (734) 222-6730.

Check AnnArborVotes.org for more information. And be sure to vote on Aug. 8!

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Swoop's food pantry at EMU

continued from page 6

pus, where it is estimated that one out of 10 students face hunger or significant nutritional deficits.

Haley Moraniec, a graduate of EMU's social work program and currently a Masters of Social Work student, proposed Swoop's Student Food Pantry in May of 2014. Working in the EMU Volunteers Incorporating Service Into Our Neighborhoods (VISION) center and volunteering with Growing Hope helped Moraniec realize she was passionate about food insecurity and its related issues. After doing a research paper on the topic, she reasoned that the food pantry was a resource that would greatly benefit the EMU community.

"I started the pantry because, knowing how diverse EMU is, not just in ethnicity but also in socioeconomic status and parental status, I figured it was a resource the EMU community could greatly benefit from," Moraniec said.

According to Moraniec, the University was at first very reluctant to accept the premise of the pantry proposal and the pantry received much negative feedback from the EMU administration.

"How can students be hungry if they can afford tuition?" became the most common question posed to Moraniec.

In fact, 38-41 percent of EMU students receive Pell Grants, a source of financial aid for low-to-moderate income students that covers a portion of their college costs. (The maximum Pell Grant benefit for 2017 was \$5,815 and the absolute least that a full-time, in-state student paid for EMU tuition and fees that year was \$4,443.50, leaving only \$1,371 for four months' room, board, books and other supplies.) Many students take out loans and are consequently swallowed in debt, while others don't get loans but suffer privation.

With pushback from the EMU administration, it became apparent that the university was unaware of the extent to

which its students were facing homelessness and hunger. When Moraniec solicited letters of support from faculty, she learned that they were well aware of students' needs.

"Faculty members and advisors were keeping oatmeal, ramen noodles and granola bars in their offices for hungry students," said Moraniec.

"The pantry opened up a dialogue about the invisible needs of students," said Moraniec, who acknowledges that housing and food insecurity are often unseen issues that are widely stigmatized.

The regents were persuaded to approve the pantry in the summer of 2015 after being presented with data on the number of EMU Pell Grant-eligible students, how on-campus food pantries operate at other universities, letters of support across campus, and departmental support from the College of Health and Human Services (CHHS) and the School of Social Work. Swoop's started out in a tiny room on the third floor of the CHHS. The first day Swoop's opened, Moraniec was afraid no one would show up. Instead she found a long line winding down the hallways of the CHHS, waiting for them to open.

Swoop's Student Food Pantry serves about 130-150 students each month with a diverse representation of races, genders, socioeconomic and parental statuses. When students first come to Swoop's, they fill out an intake form and present their student schedule; enrollment at EMU is the only eligibility requirement. Of the students utilizing the food pantry, 22 percent acknowledged that they were currently experiencing homelessness.

The pantry is set up like a grocery store and students are able to choose selections from fresh produce, canned fruits and vegetables, bread, pasta, dairy products and even frozen meat. About 60 percent of the food in Swoop's is supplied by Food Gatherers (either

donated or purchased) and generous members of the EMU community donate the rest.

Swoop's offers a wide selection of non-food items, as well, such as personal hygiene items, cold weather gear, baby items, and household items including dish soap and toilet paper. Students may visit the pantry twice a month and are allowed a third visit in the case of emergencies.

Many users of the student food pantry have expressed gratitude to its staff and donors. Several patrons sent in photos of themselves standing by the first turkey they had ever made. One 19-year-old student rode on the bus home to Ohio with his frozen turkey so his family would have meat for Thanksgiving that year. Another student sent a photo of the birthday cake she made for her son using items from the pantry.

"Being an immigrant student living in the United States with my spouse [as my dependent] not allowed to work, Swoop's has been a really great life-saver for us. We really appreciate it and I wish I could support Swoop's in the future when I find a job after my graduation," one student said.

Moraniec believes that the opening of Swoop's "brought goodwill to EMU" and drew attention to important issues that needed to be addressed, particularly because very little has been done nationwide to combat homelessness and hunger on college campuses.

The story of Ramone Williams, a homeless EMU senior, broke in December 2015 and went viral.

That precipitated more dialogue, meetings and eventually acceptance and support. In August of 2016, EMU allocated a large space for the food pantry in the basement of Pierce Hall, where it now resides. Donations of items and money come in frequently from students, faculty and staff.

"People hand me checks and food as I'm walking to class," said Moraniec. It is more convenient for her, though, if donations are dropped off at Swoop's during business hours, noon to 5:00 p.m., during the summer.

"I am humbled and happy to be able to help. We have reached more people than we ever thought we would," said Moraniec. Since its opening in September 2015, Swoops has had 3,012 student visits from about 800 individuals.

Monetary donations can be made to Swoop's Student Food Pantry on the Swoop's website, www.emich.edu/swoopspantry, by mail or in-person. Food donations are always welcome, as well. A list of current needs and hours of operation can be accessed on the Swoop's website. Swoop's is located at 104 Pierce Hall in Ypsilanti.



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Warmed honey-feta spread

by Elizabeth Bauman
Groundcover Contributor

- 1 block feta cheese
- olive oil
- 2 tablespoons honey

minutes. Remove from oven and spread honey on top of feta. Return to oven and broil for 20-30 seconds. Watch it carefully!

Serve immediately with crackers. Perfect with a summer salad.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place feta in shallow baking dish. Brush with olive oil. Bake in oven for 8-10



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